

Saturday, June 18, 1949

INFORMATION SERVICE

Published Weekly, Except During July and August, by the

DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

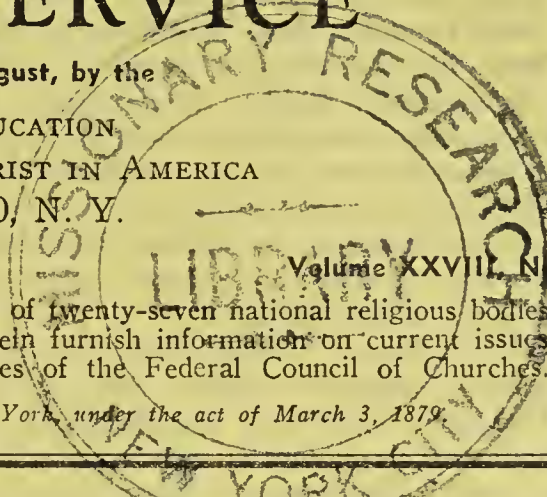
FEDERAL COUNCIL OF THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN AMERICA

297 FOURTH AVENUE, NEW YORK 10, N. Y.

Price \$2.50 Per Year—Single copies this issue 10 cents.

The Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America is a federation of twenty-seven national religious bodies through which they are rendering united service. Articles appearing herein furnish information on current issues and are not to be construed as declarations of official attitudes or policies of the Federal Council of Churches.

Entered as second-class matter January 4, 1924, at the Post Office at New York, under the act of March 3, 1879.



The U. N. on Religious Liberty

On April 30 the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a resolution on the "grave accusations" against Hungary and Bulgaria in regard to "their obligations under the peace treaties to ensure . . . the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms." The General Assembly expressed its "deep concern" over these accusations. It noted "with satisfaction" the steps taken by the States signatory to the peace treaties with Hungary and Bulgaria in this connection and expressed the hope that measures would be "diligently applied" to "ensure respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms." It "most urgently" drew the "attention of the Governments of Bulgaria and Hungary to their obligations under the peace treaties, including the obligation to cooperate in the settlement of all these questions." The question was kept on the agenda for the next session of the General Assembly.

The question was raised in the General Assembly in March by the Governments of Bolivia and Australia, and was referred to the Ad Hoc Political Committee for a recommendation. According to Dr. O. Frederick Nolde, director of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, the debate in the Committee centered around three different points of view. One group felt that the General Assembly should set up a committee of investigation of its own. Another group felt that the Assembly should encourage the signatories of the peace treaties with Hungary and Bulgaria to set in motion the machinery for ensuring the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms as defined in the treaties. The third group, representing countries of eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, expressed opposition to any action by the General Assembly. They contended that the question was an internal one, and any action should be taken solely by the signatories of the peace treaties, without any intervention by the General Assembly. (*Ecumenical Press Service*, American edition, May 4, 1949.)

The Bulgarian Church Law

The text of certain articles of the new Bulgarian "Law to Guarantee Freedom of Conscience and Religion" adopted February 17, 1949, is reprinted by CIP (Catholic Intercontinental Press, Inc., New York) for April 23.

"ARTICLE 3: Every religious denomination must have a governing board responsible to the state. When taking up their posts, all priests, ministers and other officials of churches and church organizations must take an oath of allegiance, or sign a solemn declaration of loyalty, to the People's Republic."

"ARTICLE 22: No religious denomination or religious

organization may maintain hospitals, welfare centers, kindergartens, or similar institutions. Such institutions belonging to a church when this law takes effect become state property."

"ARTICLE 24: No religious body may maintain correspondence with church organizations, official persons or other institutions outside Bulgaria without prior authorization by the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

"ARTICLE 25: No religious denomination or church organization having its center outside Bulgaria may maintain missions, churches, etc., in Bulgaria. Those existing now become state property within a month. Compensation will be paid."

"ARTICLE 32: All church statutes, laws, and regulations must be approved by the Minister, who has the right to demand their amendment or withdrawal.

"ARTICLE 33: Within one month, all religious denominations and churches in Bulgaria must register with the Minister the names of their priests, ministers, and officials. Only those approved by the Minister may remain at their posts."

The Lutheran Church and the Hungarian State

The struggle of the Lutheran Church against the state in Hungary and the surrender of the church are described in a series of articles in the *Lutheran* (Philadelphia) for March 16, 23, 30 and April 6, by G. Elson Ruff, editor of the magazine.

The "first sharp conflict" with the state came when Lutheran pastors broadcasting from Budapest were ordered to submit their sermons for censorship. Bishop Ordass' reply was that in that case there would be no radio sermons.

In the spring of 1948 two members of the cabinet demanded a statement from Bishop Ordass (by that time senior bishop of the entire church) "fully endorsing the government program." The Bishop replied that was possible only if the government permitted four things: "Absolute freedom of preaching, the guarantee of continued control of the church schools, unobstructed liberty to teach outside the schools, and the right of the church to continue its social work, its hospitals, orphanages." On May 16 the newspapers announced that church schools would be nationalized and began to carry daily stories attacking them. The Reformed Churches yielded quickly. Bishop Ordass refused to do so and most of the pastors supported him. He did not stir up the people against the proposal. Two other bishops were in favor of accepting the government's terms—one was a newly-elected bishop, the other was "under a suspended sentence of 10 years' imprison-

ment on the charge that he had been violently anti-Russian during the war of Russia against Finland."

Some Lutherans in government office (not Communists) had thought they could bring the Lutheran Church "into the government camp." In June, 1948, Budapest newspapers began to announce forthcoming changes in the church to bring it into line with the government. But these did not occur. Then the newspaper attacks on Bishop Ordass were turned to the (nonexistent) funds he had collected in the United States in 1947. But he still refused to approve the nationalization of the schools in spite of the pressure brought.

Meanwhile Lutheran World Action sent \$200,000 to the Hungarian Lutheran Church through the National Bank of Hungary. This was distributed to the churches and a detailed account of its use was reported to the Lutheran World Federation. On August 24 Bishop Ordass was arrested and then released the next day under house arrest. The other Lutheran bishops who protested were assured that he was free and that the action was due to the "too active zeal of the police department." On September 7 he was told he would be arrested unless he resigned at once. He was arrested on the following day. Radvanszky, the lay president of the Lutheran Church of Hungary, and Sandor Varga, pastor-secretary of the church-at-large were also arrested. In prison the Bishop was given three choices: "to resign; to be permitted, along with his family, to flee from Hungary; or to be brought before the court." He refused to resign or to escape.

The police made sensational charges of embezzlement against Varga and of breaking the currency laws against Radvanszky and Bishop Ordass. The first two resigned but the Bishop again refused to do so. All the charges were dropped at the trial except that the funds sent from America had not been properly reported to the National Bank—and this was refuted by the defense. The newspapers referred to "ORDASS AND HIS FELLOW-CRIMINALS . . .," and were "full of stories" about the "black-market transactions."

All the Lutheran churches of Budapest offered public prayers for the Bishop and his associates on September 12. Church authorities drew up a statement to be sent to all Lutheran churches in the country on September 19 reading in part: "We claim that the newspaper accusations are false. We protest against the wild falsehood of the press. . . ." But the security police sent telegrams to all the churches forbidding the reading of the statement.

The charges against Radvanszky were dropped. The defense was permitted an attorney and the Bishop was allowed to make a closing speech in his own defense. The court acknowledged that neither Bishop Ordass nor Varga had received "any personal profit" from their "crime." The Bishop was sentenced to prison for two years, the loss of civil rights for five years and fined about \$300. He has refused to resign, and has refused a pension for his family.

Dr. Ruff explains the Ordass affair by quoting a statement by a cabinet officer to the Bishop a year ago: "*The duty of the church leaders . . . is to lead the people to trust their government.*" This, the Bishop refused to do. At first, it seems "ordinary folk" liked the land reforms. But recent developments leave them "resentful and frightened." "In recent months," the writer comments, "a majority of the refugees from Hungary crossing the border into Austria are farmers and small tradesmen. . . ."

"Pastors or priests who do not speak reassuring words to their people must be discredited, made to appear as criminals, silenced." During the spring and summer of

1948 Bishop Ordass was supported by "almost all the pastors" and by "most of the church leaders." But when he was imprisoned "the church organization was immediately shattered."

In December, 1948, "a strange meeting" of the synod of the Hungarian Lutheran Church, called under "heavy pressure from the government," was held in Budapest: "There was no inspector-general with power to call the meeting. The lay presidents of all the dioceses were out of office. The presiding bishop and the church secretary were in prison." Another bishop had resigned and his successor had not been named. An agreement with the state was approved. The church accepted the nationalization of the church schools, except the institutions for training the clergy and other Christian workers and two colleges. Religious instruction would be required in public schools. The church maintains its ownership of its charitable institutions but government appointees are in actual control. Worship is to be permitted. The church press is said to be free—with persons approved by the government on the editorial boards. Financial support from taxation, decreasing each year, will be continued until 1968. The church will offer public prayers for the government and will hold services at national festivals.

Dr. Ruff thinks that the church will be allowed to "do its work in its own way" while the state continues to value its influence on the people.

Paul C. Empie, executive director of the National Lutheran Council and head of the U.S.A. committee for the Lutheran World Federation, deals specifically with the charges against Bishop Ordass in the *Christian Century* for May 11. Dr. Empie states that he sent the funds from American Lutherans to Hungary. These funds were cabled "*directly to the National Bank of Hungary.*" Government officials were "completely informed." In spite of the fact that the church financial records were seized by the government, the defense was able to prove that technical financial regulations had not been broken. Dr. Empie questions the type of "free church life" available in Hungary in view of the "forced election" of the new lay president "whose submission at every point could be counted on."

The Case for Cardinal Mindszenty

Cardinal Mindszenty Speaks,¹ is the "Authorized White Paper," published by his order. It is, the Publisher's Foreword explains, "a collection of papers" which he selected to be published abroad "in case of his anticipated arrest." The New York office of Longmans was able to secure "the original groups of Hungarian documents." Thus, the publishers had "the visible evidence of the positive authenticity" of the papers and were also able to include some others as appendices. The Introduction and the paragraphs of "connecting links" between the documents were prepared for the American edition by Akos Zombory, "a well-known Hungarian writer." It includes pastoral letters, articles from Hungarian Catholic publications (frequently written by the Cardinal or at his direction), letters of the Hungarian bishops to the prime minister, etc.

The earliest document is the pastoral letter issued by the Hungarian bishops in May, 1945, just after the liberation of the country from the Nazis; the last one is the statement he made just before his arrest on December 27, 1948, declaring his innocence of any conspiracy and that he would not resign or confess. Any confession which might appear

¹ New York, Longmans, Green and Co., 1949. \$2.50.

later should be regarded "as merely the consequence of human frailty, and in advance I declare such acts null and void." Included are statements of the church to the Nazis—and the aid given to Jews fleeing Nazi persecution.

The book presents his defense against the charges of the state as he himself saw it.

Religious Instruction of Spanish Protestants

All children in Spain are required to attend classes in religion, according to CIP (Catholic Intercontinental Press, Inc., New York) for May 7, 1949. The Spanish argument is that "since there is union of church and state in Spain . . . every citizen should be informed regarding the church's teaching as a necessary part of his civic education." CIP comments this is "debatable." It is estimated that there are about 20,000 Spanish Protestants so that the proportion of Protestant children in the public schools is very small. "On the level of cultural background," CIP comments, "the Protestant child's inclusion is readily understandable.

"However, from the standpoint of his religious training this does not satisfy. Nor is it in line with the teaching of the Catholic Church that the parent has the right to determine the religious instruction of the child.

"The reconciliation between freedom of conscience and the right of worship with the state's ruling on religious education could be achieved by having the Protestant ministers give the children of their parishioners religious instruction, preferably at a regular class period in school, or through 'released time'.

"It is a curious fact that there is little or no desire expressed by Protestants for such a program."

British Protestant Chapels in Spain

Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin told the House of Commons on April 27 that he had been trying for more than a year to secure the re-opening of seven British Protestant chapels in Spain. (According to the *Church Times* (London) for May 6 they are Baptist chapels.)

According to a release in the New York *Herald Tribune* for April 28, it seems that these chapels were closed under the terms of the Spanish "bill of rights" of 1945 which permitted them to conduct private worship but not public.

At the end of 1947 the civil governors began to interpret this "bill of rights" as "forbidding any form of proselytizing, and laid down various requirements which the chapels had to fulfill in order to function.

"These included a ban on 'external worship.' The source said that on one occasion a governor even banned the use of a rubber stamp on chapel documents. The governors also insisted that their personal consent had to be obtained to open a chapel, the source said."

The British Embassy in Madrid has appealed to the Spanish Foreign Ministry three times—January 21 and December 31, 1948 and March 24, 1949. The reply to the December note was "to the effect that the matter was being investigated." No reply has been received to the March 24, 1949 note.

When it was suggested that the chapels had been closed by local authorities rather than by Franco's central government, Mr. Bevin replied: "In my view, the central government is responsible. I do not believe that one can do anything in Spain without the central government knowing of it."

German Bishop Speaks Out

The "hour has come for our church to speak," Bishop Otto Dibelius, chairman of the German Council of the Evangelical Church, said in a pastoral letter which was read from church pulpits all over the country on June 5. Although he did not mention communism itself, the meaning was obvious. He compared the Soviet regime in Eastern Germany with the Nazi government, the security division of the People's Police taking the place of the Gestapo. The church has kept silent in spite of the disappearance of "tens of thousands" of Germans in the East since the end of the war because "our public life up to now was under the sole responsibility of the occupation powers." But, he said, with "German authority again in the making" it was time to speak out against "force placed above all right, inner untruthfulness and hostility against the Christian gospel." The "Gestapo-like methods" of "Department K 5 of the so-called People's Police" were described as follows:

"There is no need to describe details of gathering of material by spies and informers, the nightly arrests, the torturing sometimes out of description of men in jails, the interrogations where defendants have no possibility of effectively defending themselves, the uncertain period of arrest and, above all, the uncertainty of what will become of members of one's family.

"We know all these details out of bitter experience of twelve years. . . . No one is safe from such a fate."

The authorities, he said, were requiring Sunday work, thus making religious services "practically impossible." "All kinds of difficulties" are being raised to prevent religious education in the schools. He said: "All this and much else which cannot be recorded here is only possible where the Christian gospel has been deserted." While the church has found "understanding and kindness" for some of its requests, nevertheless "it is a fact" that political coercion is being used to cause "all possible injuries" to the church in East Germany. (*New York Times*, June 7.)

Recent Developments in Church Unity Abroad

The conference between delegates representing the Church of England and British Free Churches, which began in 1947 as the result of a sermon preached by the Archbishop of Canterbury in November, 1946, has issued a statement on the agreements reached so far.¹ (See INFORMATION SERVICE for May 10, 1947, for a brief statement of the proposal.)

"On the doctrines of God the Father, the Person and the work of Christ, the Person and mission of the Holy Spirit, the Trinity, and the Life Everlasting, we have found nothing which separates any one of these communions from another." The differences in the use of "doctrinal formularies" must be considered later.

Agreement was reached on the following statements on the doctrine of the church:

"(a) The church is not a voluntary association of individual believers; it rests not on the will of men, whether as individuals or societies, but on the creative will of God.

"(b) The visible unity of the church is the divine will for it. Visible unity does not imply uniformity, but implies at least that each part of the church is able to recognize every other part as professing a true faith and administering the sacraments and discipline of Christ by means of its ministry, in such a way that there are no barriers of principle to prevent cooperation in evangelization and free mutual participation in worship and sacraments.

¹ *British Weekly* (London) April 7.

"(c) The ministry being the gift of God to the church, and existing in and for the church, is integral to the continuation of the mission of Christ to the world.

"(d) The church is the body of Christ and the structure of the church should express its function. Thus order is the vehicle of the Spirit.

"(e) The unity and continuity of the faith should be preserved; that is, the order of the church should be such as to symbolize, safeguard, and mediate the apostolic message and mission.

"An essential element in continuity is the maintenance of the apostolic faith, worship and witness as set out in the New Testament."

It is the "intention" of both the episcopal and the non-episcopal ministries "to preserve the unity, continuity and universality of the church.

"It is recognized as desirable that pastoral oversight should be exercised within a group of congregations, parishes or churches by those who in their official capacity represent the church as a whole; and it is stated that in some form or other in all the churches there is such oversight."

Questions Requiring Investigation

The Anglican and Free Church delegates each drew up a series of questions which "seemed to require investigation." The Anglican representatives wanted to know what functions in addition to ordination must be safeguarded by a Free Church "taking episcopacy into its system." Would it include a separate house for bishops in the assembly to avoid giving clergy and laity "over-riding powers in matters of faith," episcopal confirmation, and some jurisdiction over local congregations? The ordination of women in some Free Churches and the lay administration of Holy Communion "gravely complicate" the problems of intercommunion and the interchange of ministers. Underlying these is the "theological question of the relation of the ministry of the Word and Sacraments to the life of the Body of Christ." Would confirmation be required of Free Churchmen before admitting them to communion?

The Free Churchmen asked whether the most important thing in the concept of "the continuity of the church" is the episcopal succession or, "as the Free Churches have always held, the proclamation of the apostolic faith in word and by life, together with the administration of the Gospel sacraments." "Is episcopacy part of the Gospel?" Can the Anglican interpretation of the functions of the bishop be reconciled with "the high place assigned to the laity in the Free Churches?" (Where lay administration of the sacrament is permitted it is "only by duly authorized persons.") Would intercommunion be possible between Anglicans and Free Churches with different methods of admission to full membership? Could the different denominations maintain their own identity?

The conference agreed that it is essential that there should be "a genuine sharing of different traditions" and "the visible unity of the Church of Christ should be accepted as the final objective."

The British Congregational-Presbyterian Plan

The vote of the British Congregational churches on the proposed merger with the Presbyterian Church of England revealed that "while a minority were against organic union and a larger minority in favor of it, the overwhelming vote was for closer cooperation. (*Christian World*, London, April 7.)

Therefore the Council of the Union recommended to the Assembly that the Union enter into a "covenant rela-

tion" with the Presbyterian Church of England. They propose that both denominations declare that "they do now enter into a new and solemn relationship with one another, covenanting together to take counsel with one another in all matters of common concern, to learn from one another, as the Spirit may direct, and to seek all opportunities for their mutual cooperation in the service of the Kingdom of Christ, whom they acknowledge as the sole Head of His Church."

The Australian Proposals

In Australia also the Church of England and the Free Churches have been working for some years on a plan for a mutual extension of orders. (See INFORMATION SERVICE for March 6, 1948 for a summary of the proposals.) The Bishop of London discusses them in the Spring issue of the *Ecumenical Review* (Geneva). This plan proposes that "in order to enable various churches to share in each other's sacraments, the ministers of those churches should undergo a united imposition of hands by the competent ordaining authorities of each, together with the use of a common formula." It does not involve the acceptance of the episcopate but would allow ministers of the churches concerned to share in work at the pastoral level and to minister the sacraments. It was felt that the great lack was the "authority to minister in each other's churches." No theological questions are raised.

The Lambeth Conference in 1948 concluded that it was "not prepared to discourage further explorations along this line, if they are linked with provisions for the growing together of the churches concerned and with definite acceptance or organic union as their final goal." The conference did, however, recognize certain disadvantages. The Bishop of London does not think the practical difficulties are "very great." He would like to see "a representative body of theologians try to make the best case possible for the scheme, and discuss whether it could be made to stand up in any circumstances." We cannot wait till everything has been straightened out "by the book." We must try to find "some practical step that we can take in the immediate future."

Catholic Theologian on Church Unity

A well-known Roman Catholic theologian, Dr. Urs von Balthasar, has stated that a unity exists "behind all the divisions of the churches through the presence of the Word of God."

The statement was made in a series of lectures at the University of Basle, Switzerland, on "Karl Barth and Catholicism," which was sponsored by the Catholic Union for Christian Culture.

"The significant thing about these lectures," states the official publication of the Reformed Church of Switzerland, is that "the witness to this unity should have been borne by a Catholic, where we otherwise feel our points of separation from the Catholics to be particularly sharp."

Expressing his gratitude to Karl Barth for "pushing forward the boundaries of theology," Dr. von Balthasar declared that "even though the boundaries are set by God, we usually mark them out too quickly. They can be fixed once again."

Dr. Balthasar is the chaplain to the Catholic students at the University of Basle. He is the author of *The Heart of the World*, an inspirational volume published in 1946, and has edited texts of St. Augustine. The Catholic Union for Christian Culture is a local Catholic group of laymen and clergy.—*Ecumenical Press Service*, Geneva.